



National Commission on
Correctional Health Care

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April 11, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael Burgess
Chairman
Health Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Gene Green
Ranking Member
Health Subcommittee
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
237 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for H.R. 4005 – Medicaid Reentry Act

Dear Chairmen Walden and Burgess and Ranking Members Pallone and Green:

On behalf of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care, the only national organization committed solely to improving the quality of health care in jails, prisons and juvenile confinement facilities, I am writing to express the organization's support for Rep. Tonko's Medicaid Reentry Act (H.R. 4005). The bill is being considered during the Health Subcommittee's April 11 hearing titled "Combating the Opioid Crisis: Improving the Ability of Medicare and Medicaid to Provide Care for Patients."

NCCHC believes that optimizing health insurance coverage and continuity of care represents a vital means for improving health care for correctional populations.

Most prison inmates and a large proportion of jail detainees and jail inmates lack health insurance, yielding worse health care access postrelease, disruptions in continuity of care for serious conditions, and worse health outcomes. This is especially true for individuals with untreated opioid use disorder, for whom the risk of opioid-related overdose and death dramatically increases in the first days and weeks postrelease. Lack of insurance coverage, particularly for mental health and substance abuse services, also increases the risk of re-arrest, resulting in a vicious, costly cycle of recidivism.

By granting states limited new flexibility to restart benefits for Medicaid-eligible incarcerated individuals 30 days prior to release, Mr. Tonko's bill facilitates prerelease treatment, connections to community-based care, and uninterrupted treatment for opioid use disorders and other chronic conditions and communicable diseases. The result benefits not only the individuals newly released from the criminal justice system, but public health as well.

NCCHC is pleased to support H.R. 4005, the Medicaid Reentry Act.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara Wakeen

Barbara A. Wakeen, MA, RDN, CCHP
Chair, National Commission on Correctional Health Care